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KUNG FU

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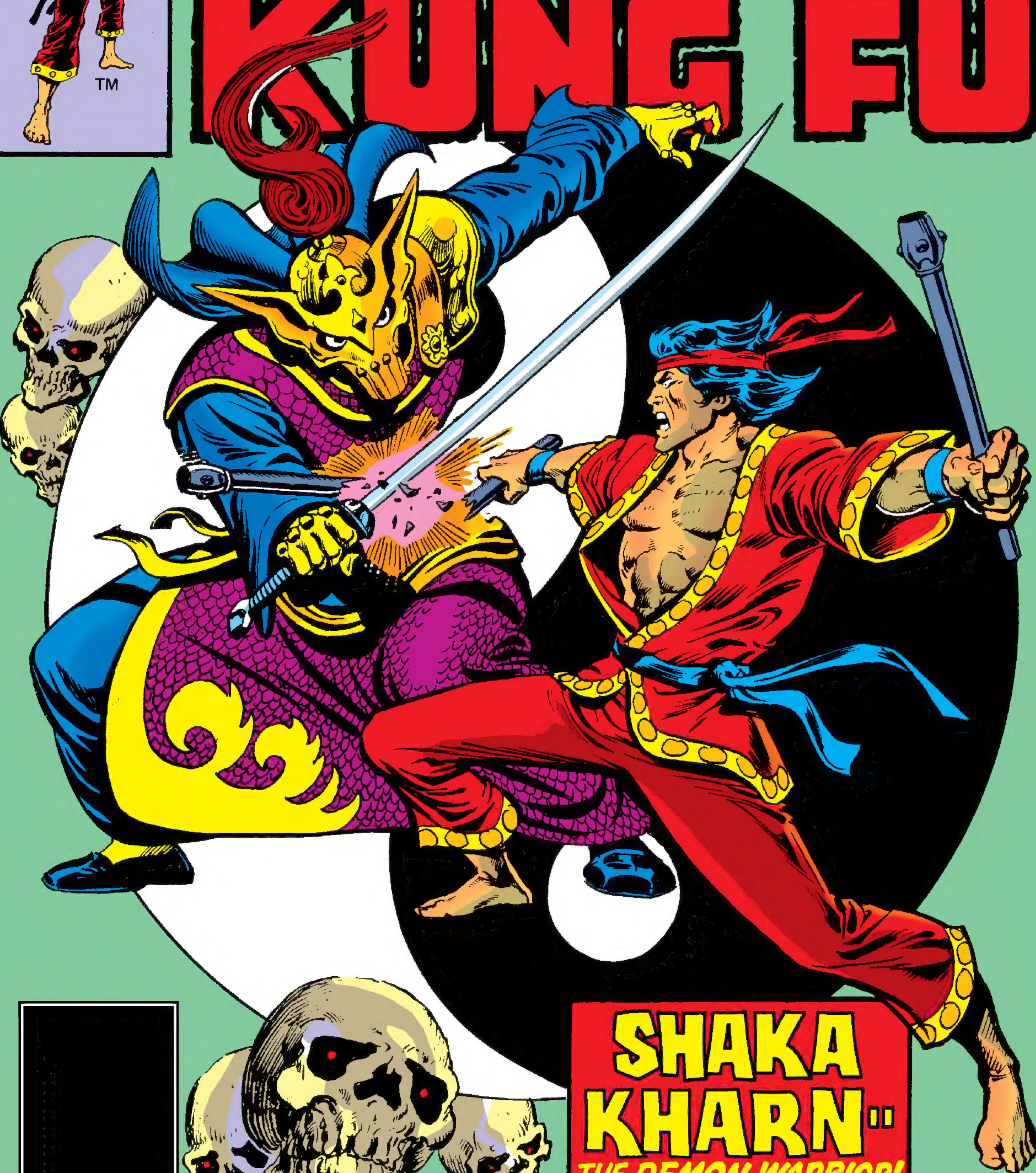
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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU



TM

TM



**SHAKA
KHARN**
THE DEMON WARRIOR!

GIVEN LIFE BY FU MANCHU--
TO BRING DEATH TO SHANG-CHI!

ERNIE
CHAN
1976

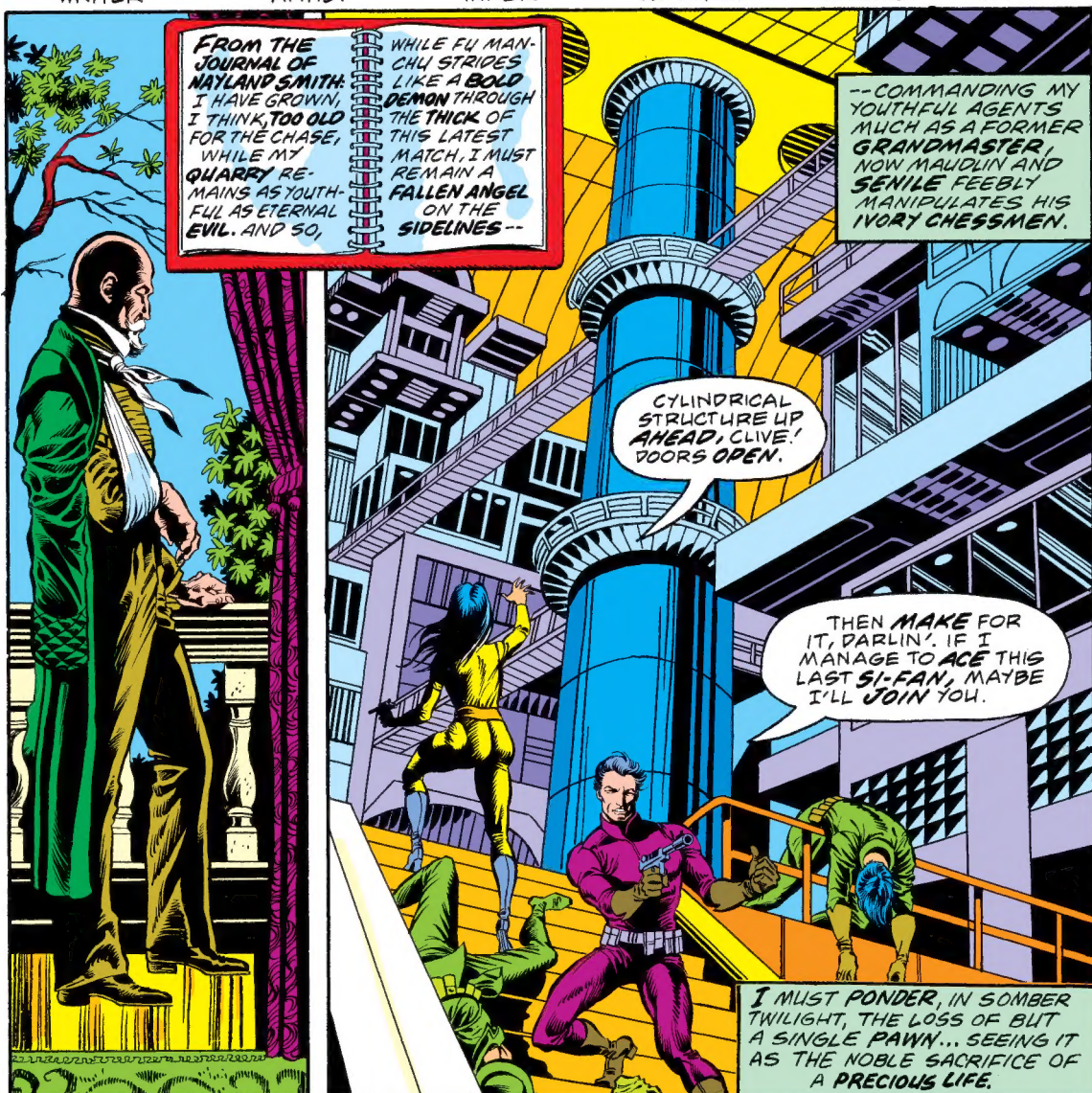
"Call me Shang-Chi, as my **father** did, when he raised me and molded my mind and my body in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father. Since then, I have learned that my father is **Dr. Fu Manchu**, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to **honor** him would bring nothing but **dishonor** to the spirit of my **name**.

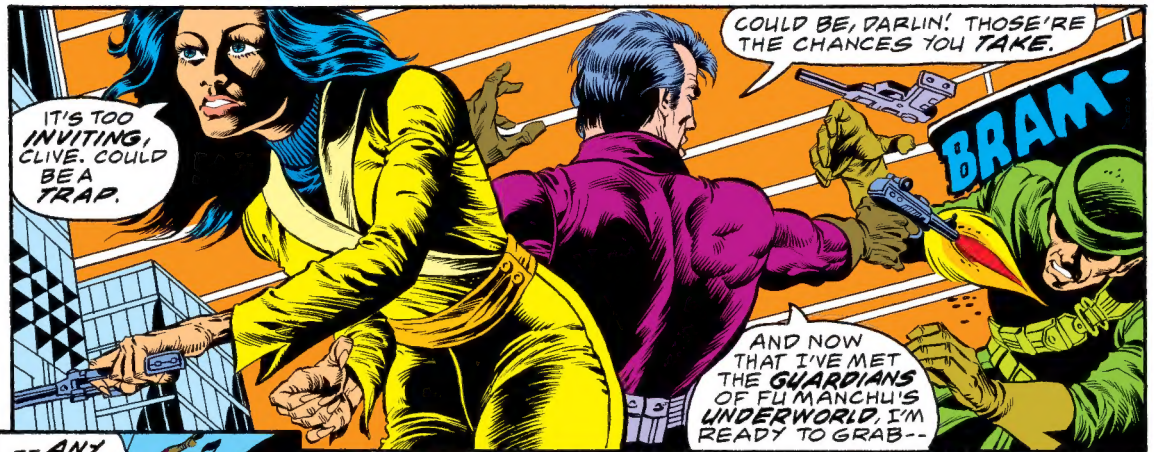
Stan Lee PRESENTS: MASTER OF KUNG FU!™

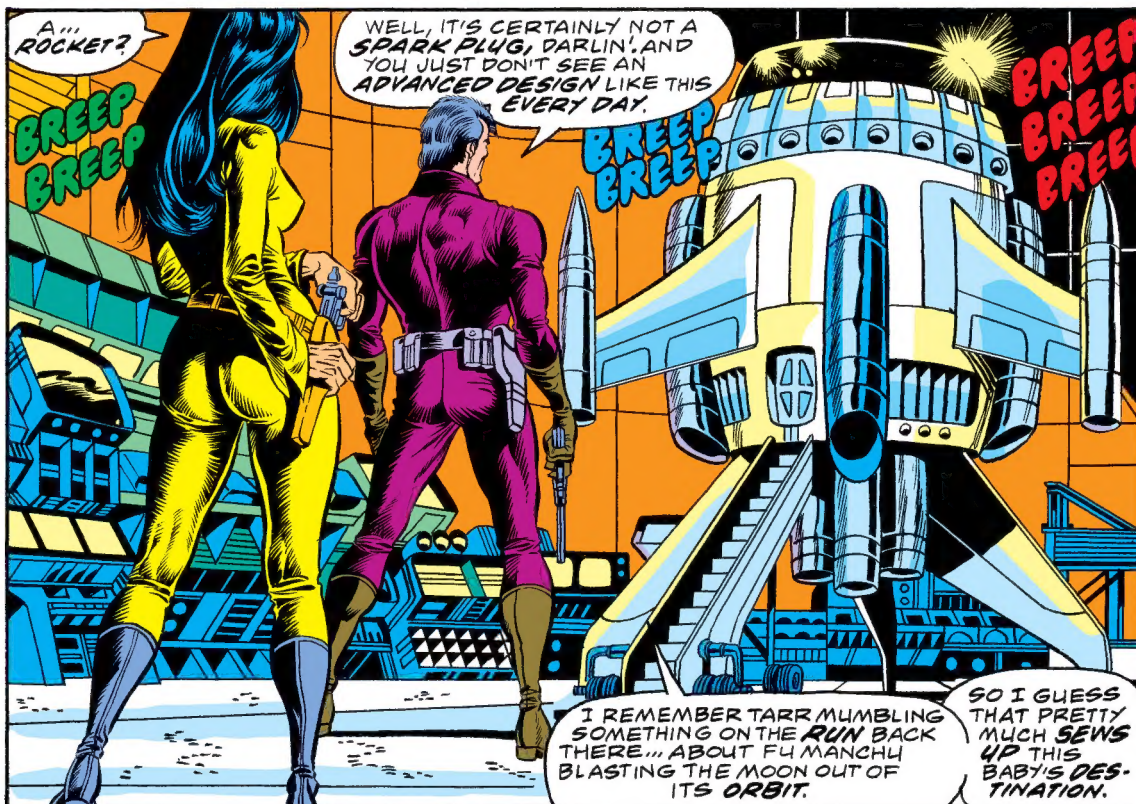
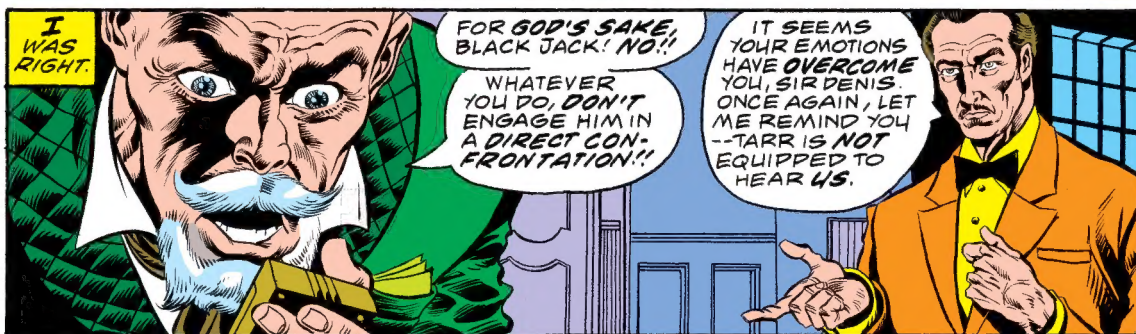
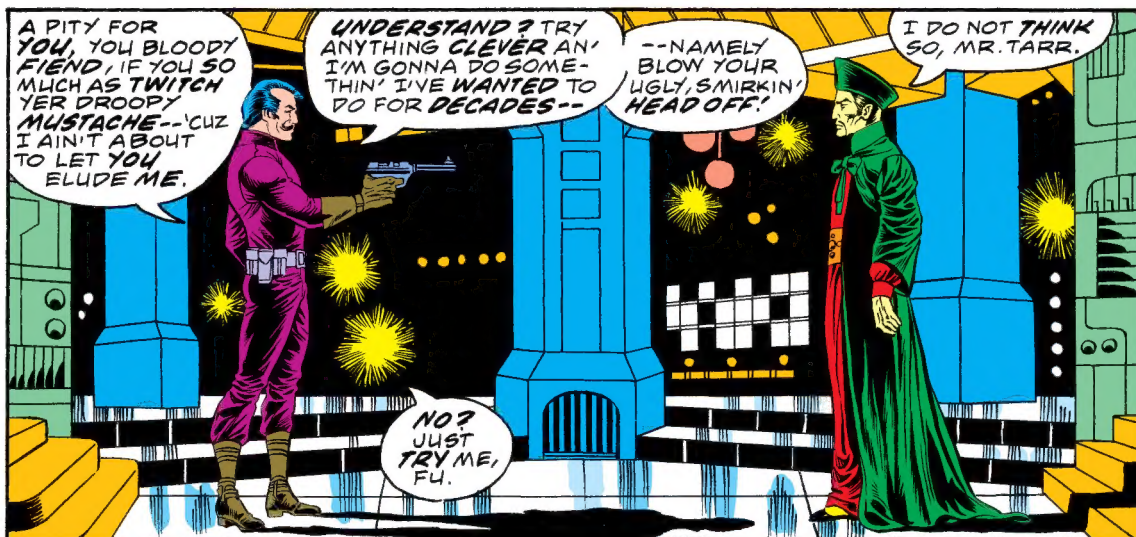
Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

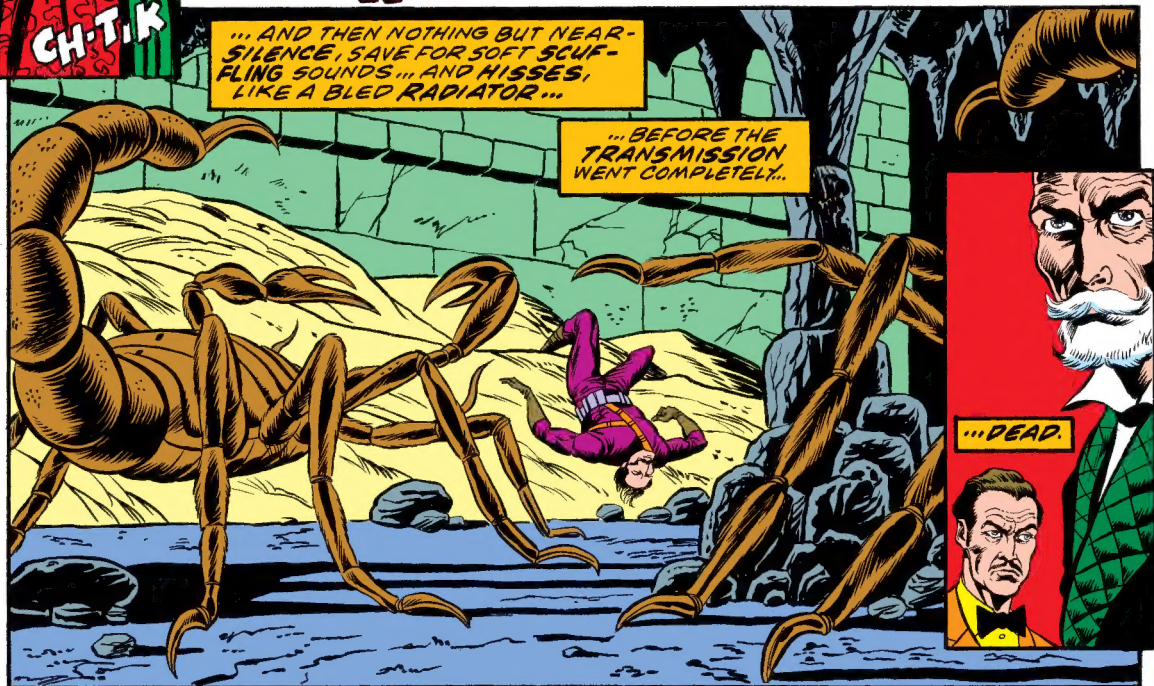
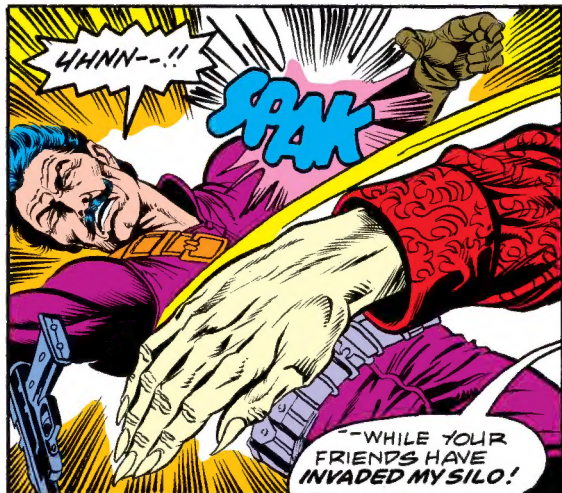
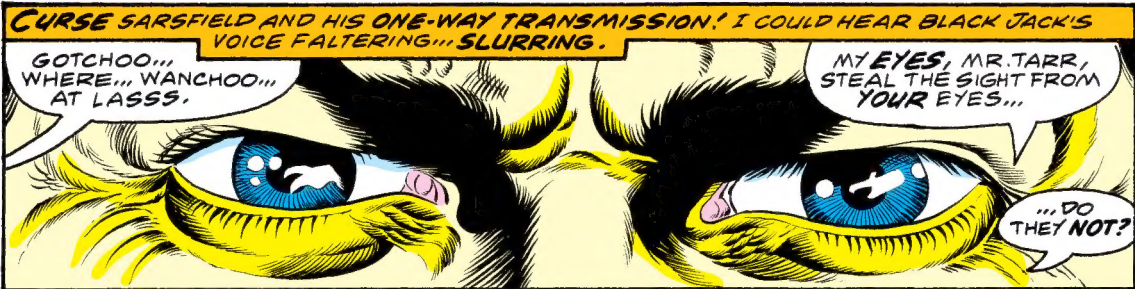
PART I (SIR DENIS HAYLAND SMITH): The AFFAIR of the AGENT who DIED!

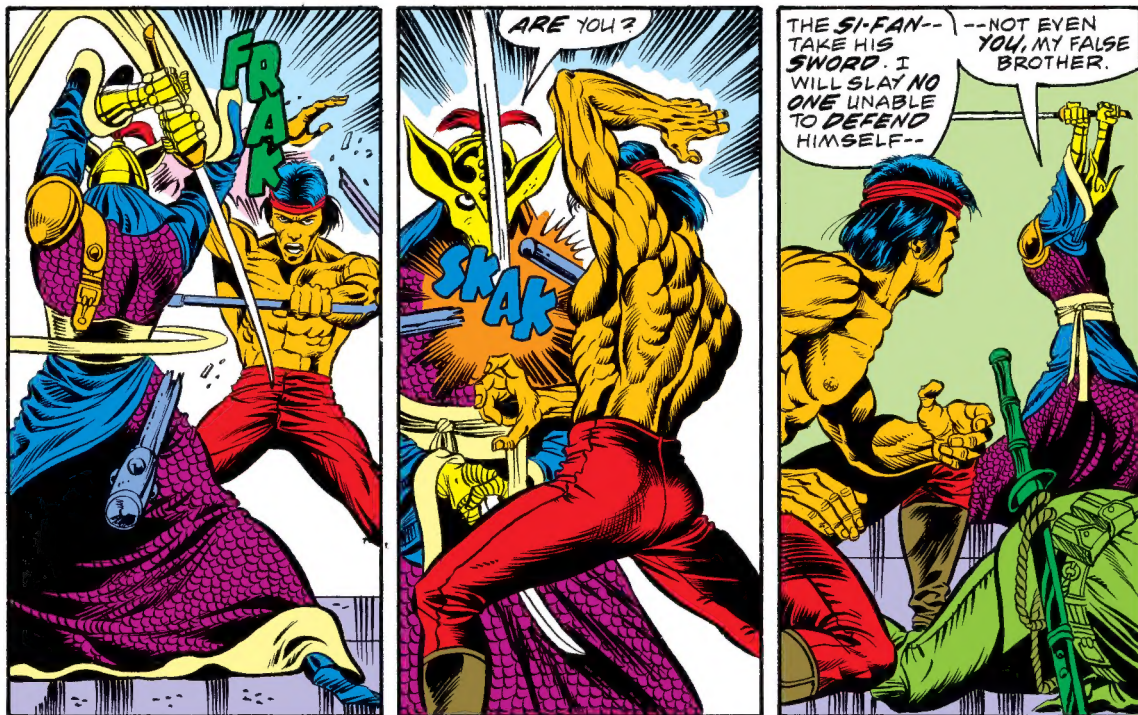
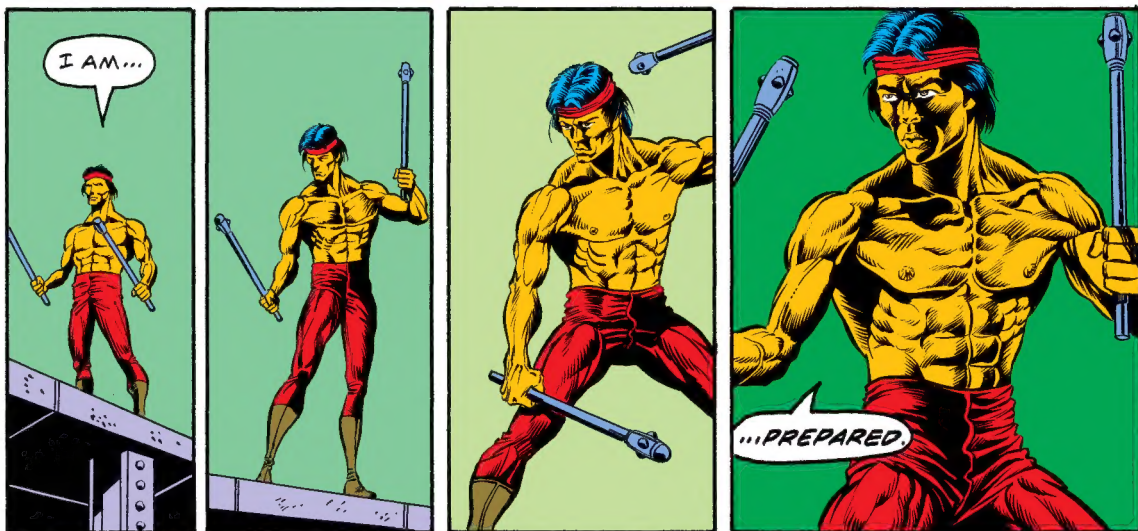
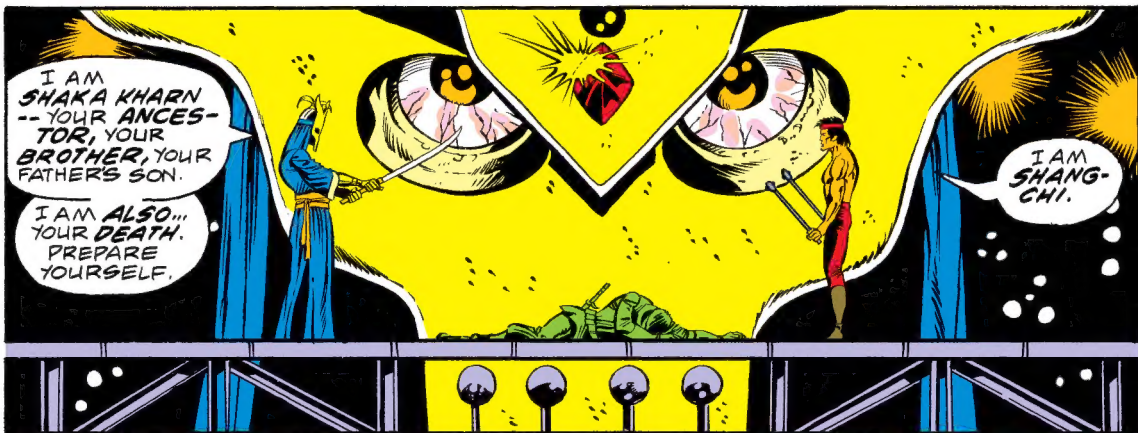
DOUG MOENCH * PAUL GULACY * PABLO MARCUS * DENISE WOHL * JAN COHEN * A. GOODWIN
WRITER * ARTIST * INKER * LETTERER * COLORIST * EDITOR!











ONE OF MY CHESSMEN HAD FALLEN--PERHAPS FOREVER-- AND I COULD ONLY WONDER ABOUT THE OTHERS.

DOES HE REALLY THINK THAT ROCKET--SOPHISTICATED OR NOT-- CAN WRENCH THE MOON FROM THE EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL PULL?

DON'T PUT ANYTHING PAST HIM, CLIVE.

YES... BUT, WAIT A MINUTE! THE ALARM'S STOPPED!

SOMEONE'S COMIN'-- FASTER THAN I EXPECTED. BETTER GET YOUR LITTLE FANNY OUT OF HERE, DARLIN'.

THERE'S ANOTHER DOOR-WAY, OPPOSITE THE ONE WE ENTERED.

COME ON, CLIVE! AND HURRY!

NO THANKS, DARLIN'. AT ONE TIME I MIGHT'VE FOLLOWED YOU ANYWHERE-- BUT THINGS HAVE CHANGED NOW THAT CHI'S ON THE SCENE.

GOT NOTHING SPECIAL IN MIND WORTH LIVING FOR RIGHT NOW. NOT THAT I'M SUICIDAL, MIND YOU...

... JUST A LITTLE MORE WILLING TO TAKE THE HEAVY RISK. WITH LESS TO LIVE FOR, I CAN BETTER AFFORD TO PLAY HERE.

SO YOU JUST SPLIT, DARLIN', WHILE I STICK AROUND AND PLAY STOW-AWAY IN THE ROCKET.

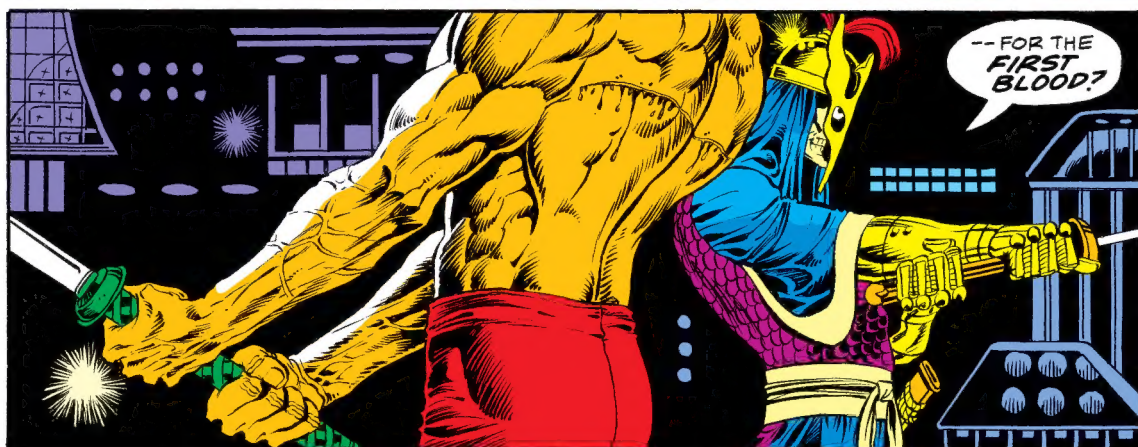
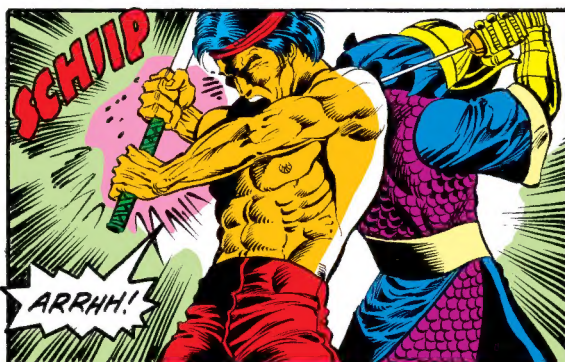
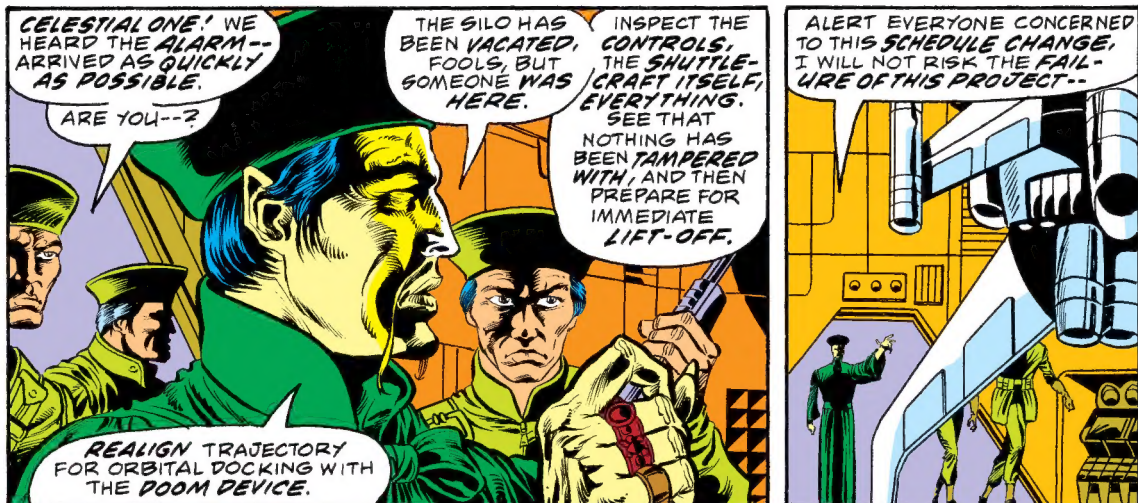
DON'T BE CRAZY CLIVE. IT'LL ONLY TAKE SECONDS FOR THEM TO FIND YOU IN THERE!

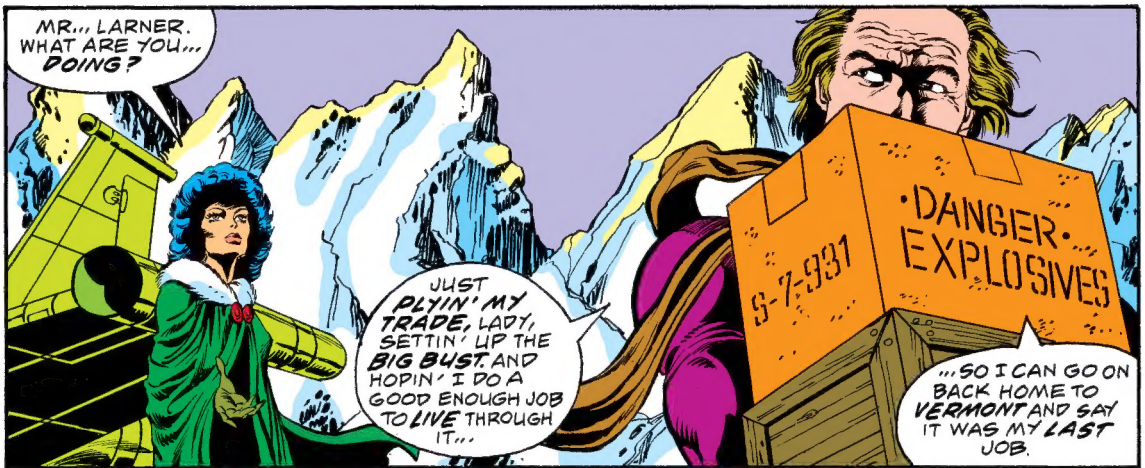
NOT A CHANCE DARLIN'. I'M A WHIZ AT HIDE-AND-SEEK. NOW SCOOT-- BEFORE THEY NAIL YOUR SILKY HIDE TO THE WALL!

GOT TO FIND SHANG-CHI. SAVE CLIVE FROM HIS OWN STUPIDITY.

SEEMS I GAINED THIS BUCK ROGERS CHARIOT WITH ONLY A SECOND TO SPARE.

HOPE MY EX-DARLIN' WAS BLESSED WITH THE SAME TIMING.







I HAD GIVEN UP ALL HOPE LONG BEFORE BLACK JACK'S VOICE FINALLY CRACKLED OVER THE RECEIVER. HE WHISPERED--



"YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT'S DOWN HERE, SIR DENIS, BUT I'LL SAVE IT FOR LATER--



"--CUZ RIGHT NOW I'M LOOKIN' UP THROUGH THE TRANSLUCENT CEILING--

"--AN! I'M PRETTY SURE I CAN SEE THE CHINAMAN!



"HE JUST GOT KNOCKED OFF THE CAUSEWAY!"



"AN' HE'S GOT A LONG WAY TO FALL, SIR DENIS--



"--AN AWFUL LONG WAY--



"--WITH NOTHIN' WAITIN' BELOW HIM EXCEPT A LOT OF JAGGED SPIKES.



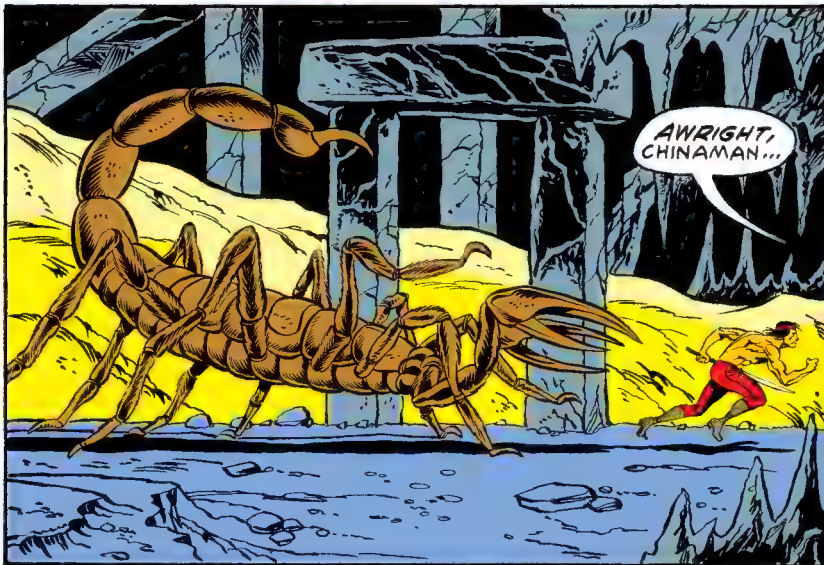
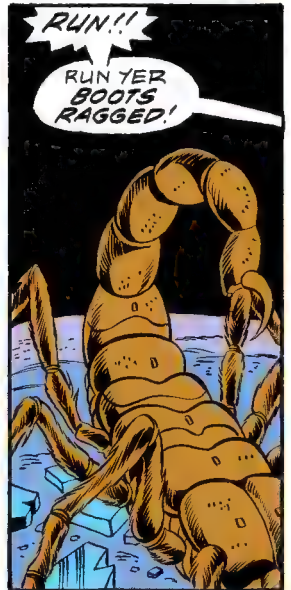
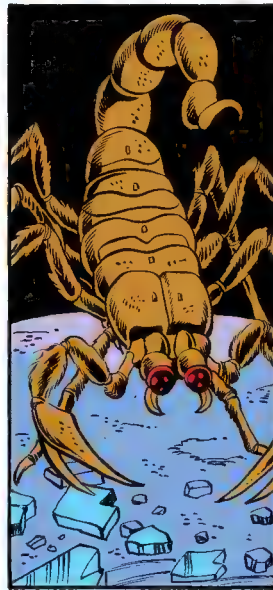
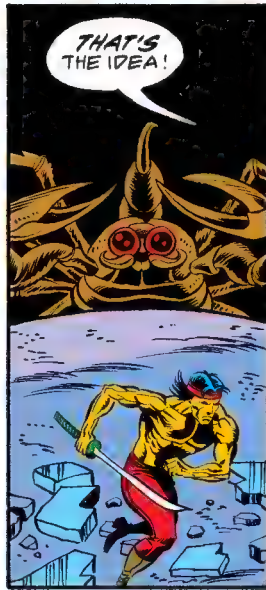
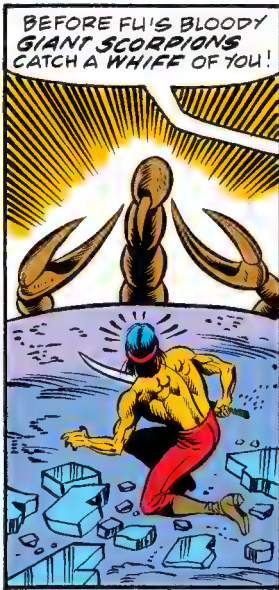
"WAIT A MINUTE! HE'S TWISTIN' HIS BODY IN MID-AIR-- LIKE A SKYDIVER--!

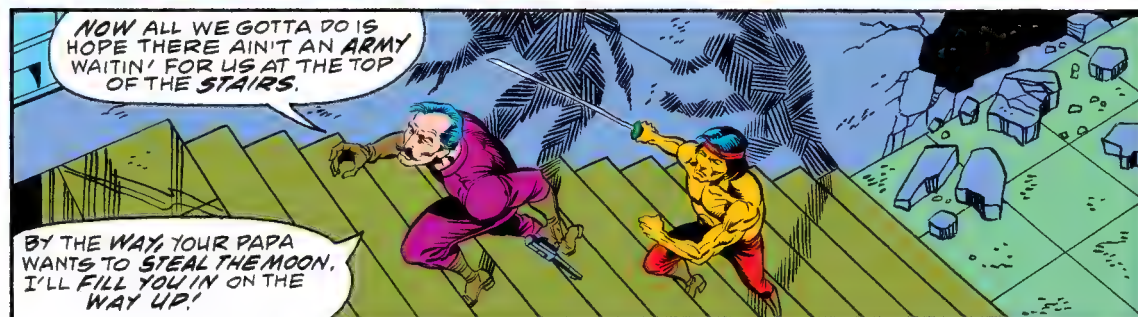
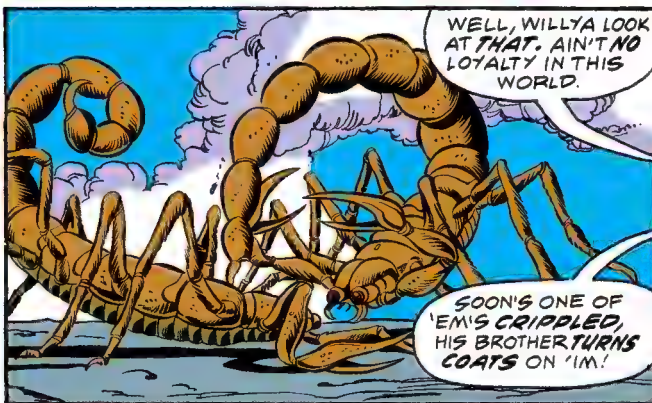
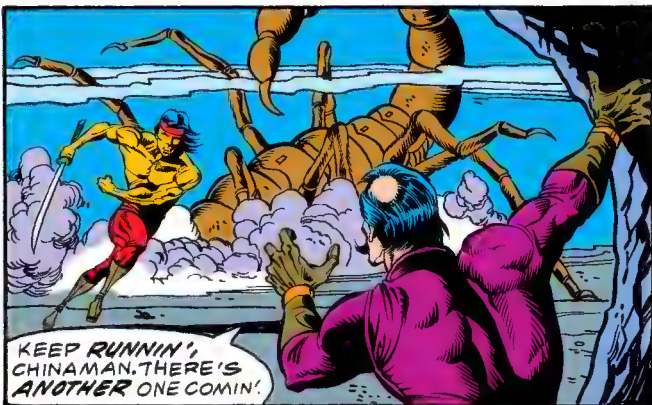
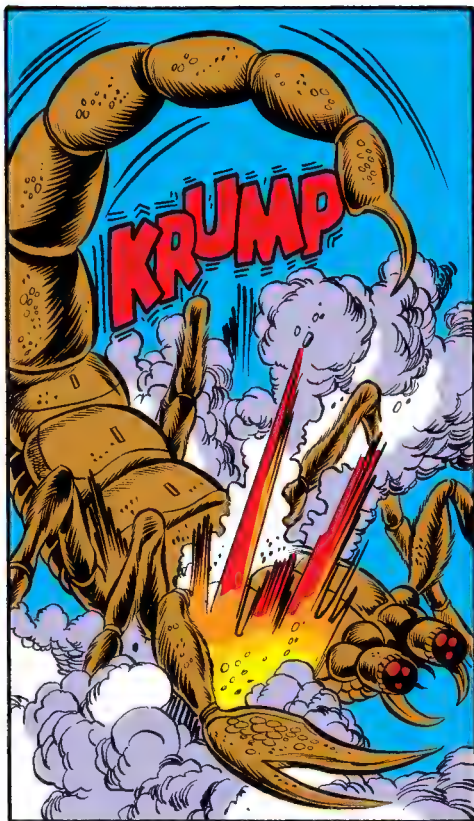


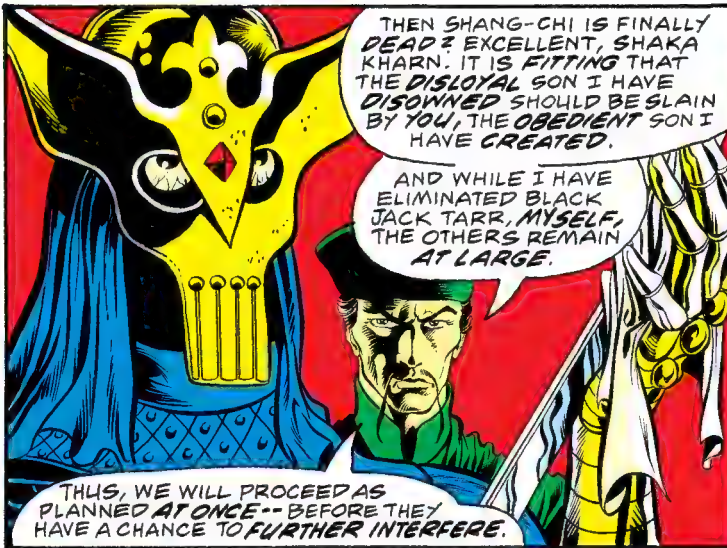
"HE DID IT, SIR DENIS!! HE MISSED THE SPIKES--

"--HIT THE LAYER OF ICE I'VE BEEN LOOKIN' UP THROUGH!"

"BUT I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S DONE HIM MUCH GOOD... PROBABLY SHATTERED HIS SPINE."







THEN SHANG-CHI IS FINALLY DEAD? EXCELLENT, SHAKA KHARN. IT IS FITTING THAT THE DISLOYAL SON I HAVE DISOWNED SHOULD BE SLAIN BY YOU, THE OBEDIENT SON I HAVE CREATED.

AND WHILE I HAVE ELIMINATED BLACK JACK TARR, MYSELF, THE OTHERS REMAIN AT LARGE.

THUS, WE WILL PROCEED AS PLANNED AT ONCE-- BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO FURTHER INTERFERE.



--CREATIN' TIDAL WAVES AND FLOODS AND--

4PPS.

OH, IT'S YOU, BLACK JACK-- AND SHANG-CHI. THANK GOD! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU EVERYWHERE.



THERE'S A MISSILE SILO AT THE END OF THIS CORRIDOR. CLIVE'S STUCK ABOARD THE ROCKET INSIDE!

WE'VE GOT TO SAVE HIM.



CRAZY FOOL RESTON. WELL, LET'S GO.

MIGHT AS WELL YANK 'IM OUTTA THE SOUP AN' GET IT OVER WITH.

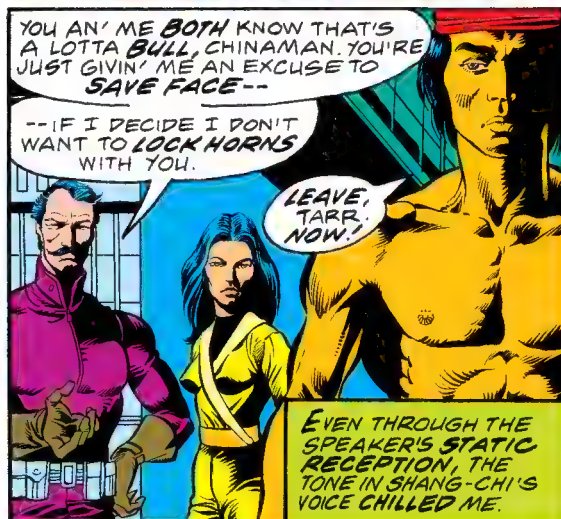


NO.

I WILL GO TO RESTON, TARR. YOU REMAIN WITH LEIKO... AND TAKE HER OUT OF THIS MOUNTAIN.

SOMEONE MUST REACH LARNER AND TELL HIM TO BE READY.

IF RESTON AND I FAIL, PERHAPS YOU AND LEIKO WILL GET THROUGH.

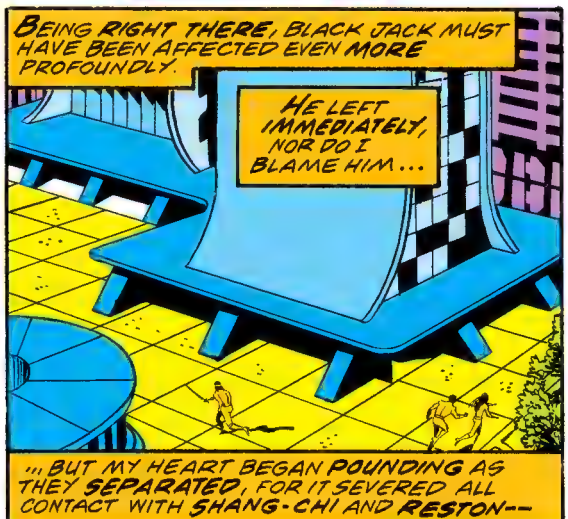


YOU AN' ME BOTH KNOW THAT'S A LOTTA BULL, CHINAMAN. YOU'RE JUST GIVIN' ME AN EXCUSE TO SAVE FACE--

--IF I DECIDE I DON'T WANT TO LOCK HORNS WITH YOU.

LEAVE, TARR. NOW!

EVEN THROUGH THE SPEAKER'S STATIC RECEPTION, THE TONE IN SHANG-CHI'S VOICE CHILLED ME.



BEING RIGHT THERE, BLACK JACK MUST HAVE BEEN AFFECTED EVEN MORE PROFOUNDLY.

HE LEFT IMMEDIATELY, NOR DO I BLAME HIM...

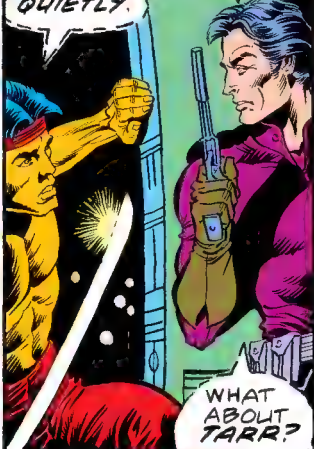
...BUT MY HEART BEGAN POUNDING AS THEY SEPARATED, FOR IT SEVERED ALL CONTACT WITH SHANG-CHI AND RESTON--

--THE ONLY TWO AGENTS STILL DIRECTLY INVOLVED.



CHI! HOW'D YOU SNEAK PAST ALL THE TECHNICIANS OUT THERE?

QUIETLY.



WHAT ABOUT TARR?

HE'S WITH LEIKO. THEY THINK I'VE COME TO BRING YOU OUT OF HERE.



NO, THEY DON'T, CHI--NOT REALLY.

THEY KNOW EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE BOTH GOING TO DO. NOW SNUGGLE DOWN AND GRAB A HIDING PLACE.



WE MAY HAVE A LITTLE WAIT BEFORE THIS CRAZY THING BLASTS OFF.



ALL RIGHT, WH, THE COAST IS CLEAR OUT THERE. IF WE'RE GONNA BREAK FOR IT--



--MIGHT AS WELL BE NOW.

IT BEGAN THEN, THE INEVITABLE TRAGEDY. I COULD FEEL IT--

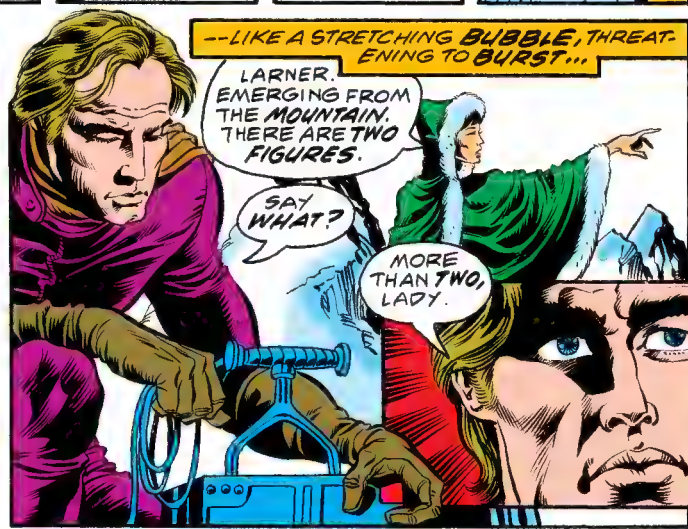


--LIKE A STRETCHING BUBBLE, THREATENING TO BURST--

LARNER. EMERGING FROM THE MOUNTAIN. THERE ARE TWO FIGURES.

SAY WHAT?

MORE THAN TWO, LADY.



"...THERE'S A WHOLE STINKIN' MOB COMIN' DOWN THAT SLOPE."



MOVE IT, WH! THEY'VE SEEN US!

IT'S A LONG RUN AN' WE'RE GONNA BE DOGGED ALL THE WAY DOWN!



BEGIN THE *COUNTDOWN* ONCE I HAVE BOARDED WITH MY SON.

COME, SHAKA KHARN.

DESTINY AWAITS US.



FASTER, WH! YOU'RE YOUNGER'N ME--!



YOU CAN PULL OUT AHEAD!



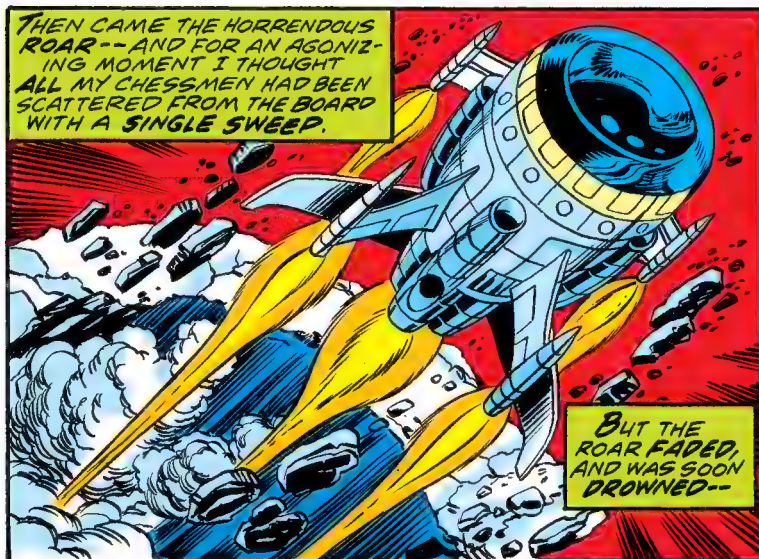
MOST OF THEM ARE *VEERING OFF*-- AFTER THE *GIRL*-- AS IF THEY WANT TO STOP HER FROM *REACHING US*.

LARNER. THE *SKIERS* ARE STILL CLOSE TO THE *MOUNTAIN*. IF YOU WERE TO--



FORGET IT, LADY. NOTHIN' WE CAN DO ABOUT IT. LITTLE LEIKO'LL JUST HAVE TO WIPE HER OWN NOSE THIS TIME.

I CAN'T RAM THIS *PLUNGER* AND COLLAPSE THAT MOUNTAIN WITH *RESTON* AND YOUR *BROTHER* STILL INSIDE.



THEN CAME THE HORRENDOUS *ROAR*-- AND FOR AN AGONIZING MOMENT I THOUGHT ALL MY *CHESSMEN* HAD BEEN SCATTERED FROM THE BOARD WITH A *SINGLE SWEEP*.

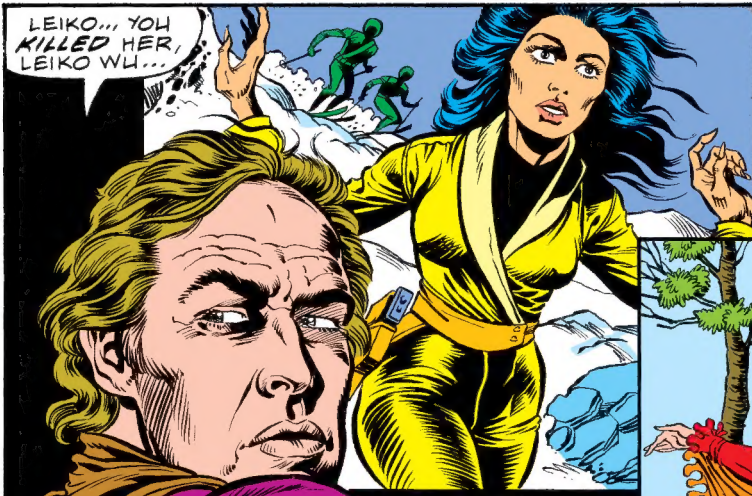
BUT THE *ROAR* FADED, AND WAS SOON *DROWNED*--



--UNDER *BLACKJACK'S* *HOARSE BELLOWS*.

ALL RIGHT, LARNER--*BLOW IT!* *RESTON* AN' THE *CHINA-MAN* ARE *CLEAR!!*

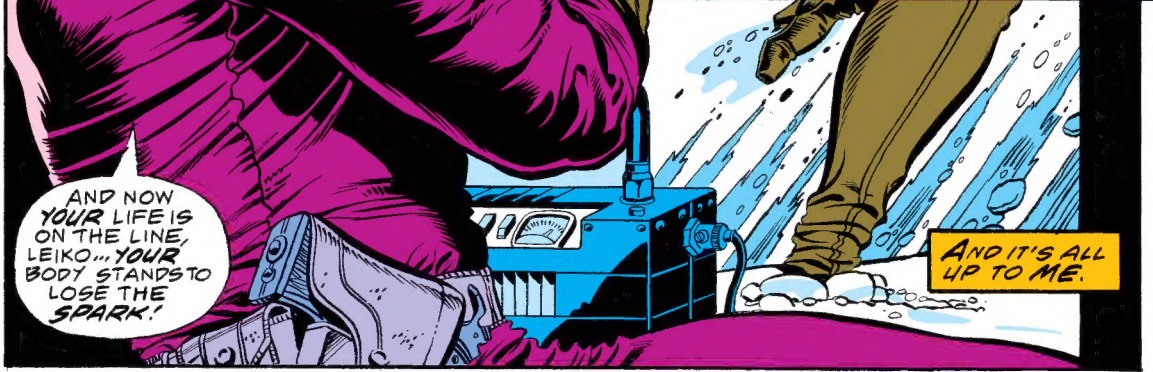
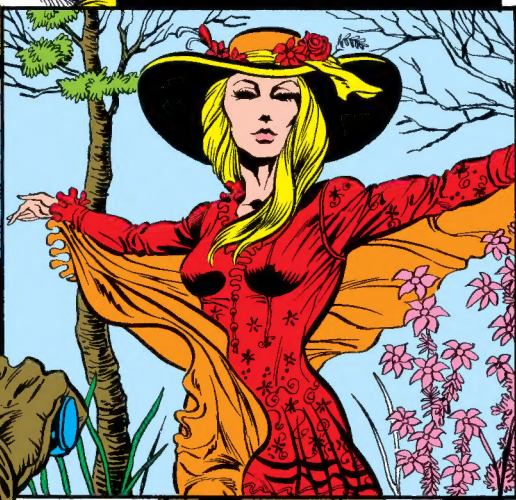
YOU *HEAR ME?* THEY'RE IN THAT *ROCKET!*



LEIKO... YOU
KILLED HER,
LEIKO WU...

"...JUST AS SURE AS IF
YOUR HAND HAD HELD THE
GUN. YOU LEFT HER THERE
TO DIE... AND YOU CAME
BACK WITH THE NEWS THAT I
MIGHT AS WELL DO THE SAME
... 'CAUSE SHE WAS GONE... MY
JENNIE... WAS GONE."

"YOU KILLED
HER!"



AND NOW
YOUR LIFE IS
ON THE LINE,
LEIKO... YOUR
BODY STANDS TO
LOSE THE
SPARK!

AND IT'S ALL
UP TO ME.



WHAT'S THE MATTER
WITH YOU LARNER?!
BLOW IT!!

THEY'RE GONNA
KILL HER!! BLOW
THE BLOODY
MOUNTAIN BEFORE
IT'S TOO LATE!



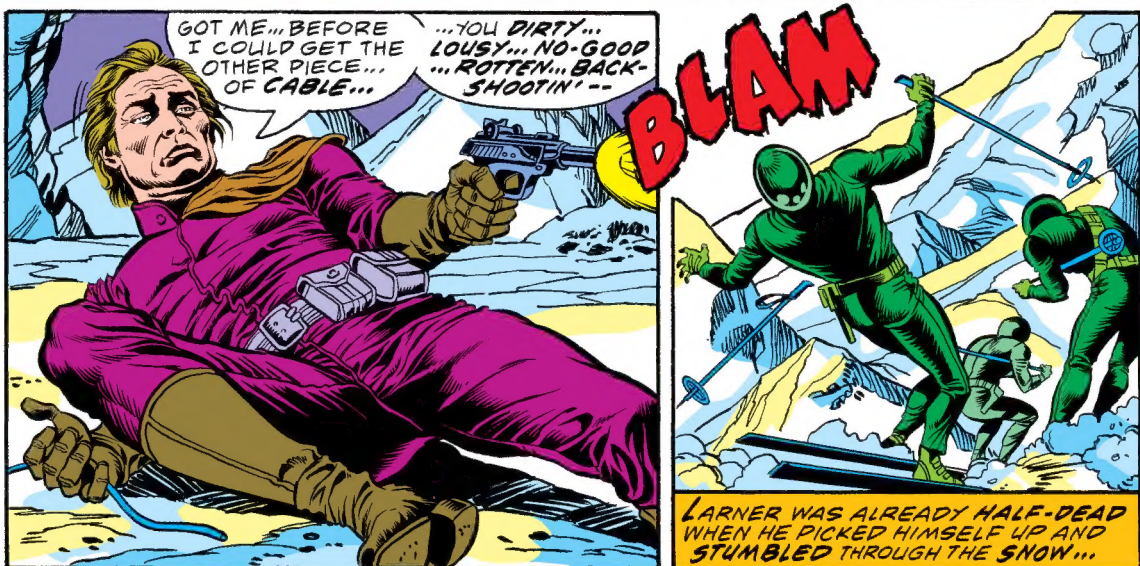
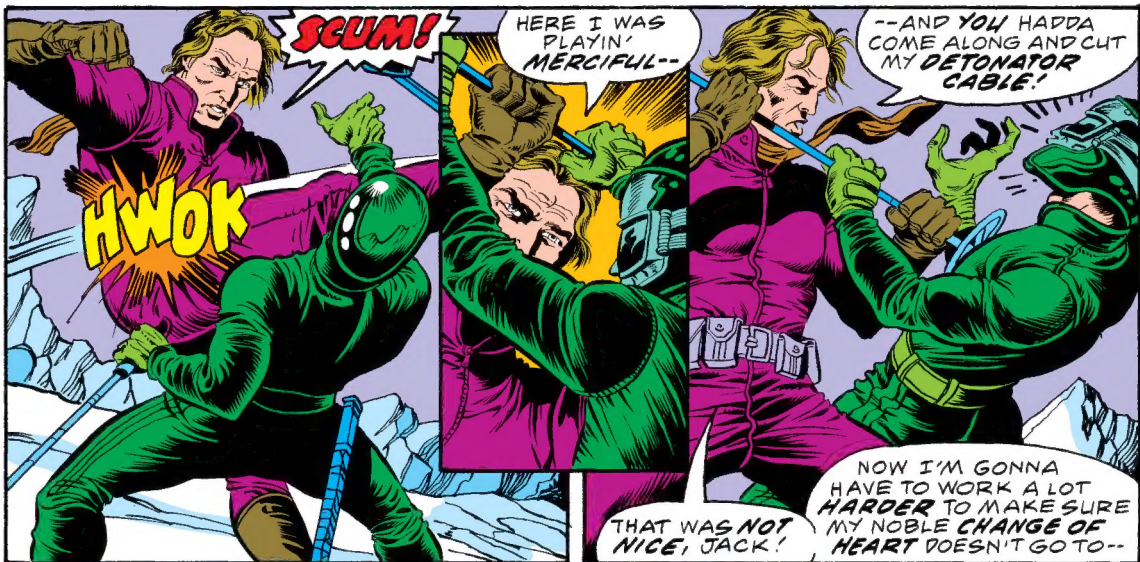
HOPE YOU
APPRECIATE
THIS, LEIKO--

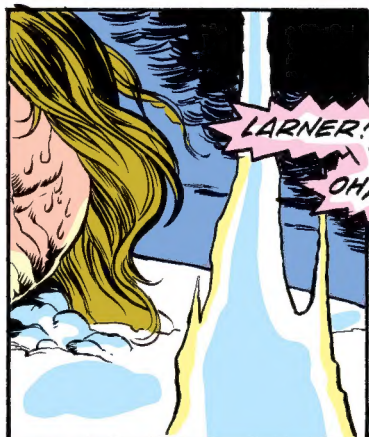
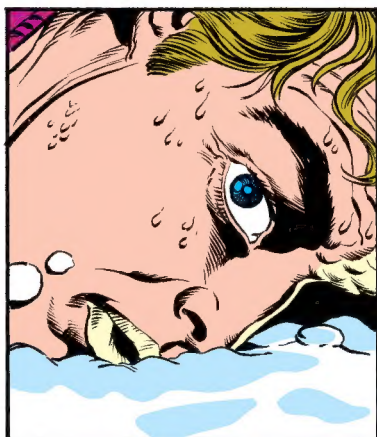
--EVEN
IF I AM
DOING IT
FOR--



"--JENNIE."

FWIPT





AND NOW THERE ARE BUT TWO KNIGHTS LEFT ON THE BOARD, ENGAGED IN A RECKLESS GAMBIT. SO IT IS NOT YET OVER... BUT, SOMEHOW, FOR ME IT HAS ENDED.

I HAVE LIKED AND RESPECTED MANY OF MY AGENTS MORE THAN LARNER... BUT NEVER HAVE I SEEN A PAWN MORE NOBLY FALLEN.



NEXT

INSIDE THE INCREDIBLE DOOM DEVICE, AND AGAINST A MAJESTIC BACKDROP OF THE COLDLY GLARING MOON-- SHANG-CHI'S FINAL BATTLE WITH SHAKA KHARN, IN--

PART VI (FU MANCHU) the DREAMSLAYER!

MISSIVES^{TO} THE MASTER!

56 MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 575 MADISON AVE. N.Y.C. 10022

Dear Doug, Paul, and Pablo,

Whoever placed the circular tag on the cover of MOKF #45, proclaiming the issue an "outstanding achievement in comics art," certainly knew what he was doing. I personally feel that the entire series should bear a similar stamp of achievement. Every one of the Moench/Gulacy issues has been far above par for a normal comic, and the series will certainly be remembered for a long time to come as an example of how much quality a comic can attain. And it's also nice to hear that MOKF's sales figures are holding up so well. All too often, it seems, a rise in quality directly corresponds with a decline in sales. Doug's ability to write effective and emotional dialogue and captions has built many a fine foundation for this impact-filled series; however, in this issue he *really* pulled out all the stops, presenting a tale of rising turbulence as the storm gathers for even greater battles. While we are swept up in the stream of initial conflict, we find ourselves truly frightened by the fact that there are events occurring beyond our control. This feeling continues throughout the book, weaving within and without the various plotlines until the dramatic moment when Leiko appears to rescue Shang-Chi and Reston. This climatic highpoint leads us right into the closing battle, a violent storm which fails to act as a cleansing catharsis and which leaves us with bubbling emotion awaiting release. Our feelings at the close of the book are extremely similar to those of Shang-Chi; we are caught up in a whirlwind of forces greater than our own—forces we cannot control but must soon confront. Great work, Doug.

And Paul cannot be overlooked. His ability as a master storyteller perfectly complement's Doug's work, and his panel layouts deserve a large share of the credit for advancing such a fluid story.

I have only one question: Why did Doug deem it necessary to group these particular issues together in six-part sequence when the story actually started much earlier than this?

Larry Twiss
227 Fox Run
King of Prussia, PA 19406

Dear Doug, Paul, and Pablo,

To answer my own question, voiced at the end of my last letter to MOKF, I now understand why Doug has grouped six particular segments of the current storyline into a unit when the plot has actually been running much longer than that. It's to give each of the six major characters a chance to narrate one of the segments. This is quite an interesting idea, allowing us to examine characterizations through the more intimate thought process, rather than through mere dialogue and actions. We can now see how the characters' feelings and motivations originate and develop—as opposed to how they simply appear from the outside. A good bit of judgment on Doug's part.

Of course, the first thing to hit me about "The Spider Spell" was that splash page. Unbelievable!

The game of espionage and intrigue continues. Now, we approach the inevitable climax...and I can't wait! Doug and Paul have yet to let me down with their storytelling abilities, and I have the fullest confidence they never will.

Larry Twiss

Actually, Larry, while our current six-part Fu Manchu cycle is indeed earmarked by Doug's "rotating narration" device (i.e. each of the six successive issues told in turn by: Shang-Chi, Clive Reston, Leiko Wu, Black Jack Tarr, Nayland Smith, and ultimately Fu Manchu), a more fundamental criterion governs the selective grouping of the cycle. The six prime issues of the saga are those distinguished by the full appearance and active participation of all major characters involved. Thus, beginning with Part I, everyone was gathered and

ready to launch into the sequence of action which does not culminate in total resolution until the conclusion of Part VI (which happens to be next issue, incidentally). And all preceding issues—beginning with "The Murder Agency" in #40 and continuing through "Prelude: Golden Daggers (A Death Run)" in #44—served primarily to set the stage (while simultaneously presenting the separate, but intertwined, Shock-Wave/Oriental Expeditors mini-epic). However, our first inkling of Fu Manchu's present activities was garnered way back in #39's "Fight Without Pity." Furthermore, the "Prelude" and (forthcoming) "Epilogue" issues—rather than merely framing an eight-part magnum opus—possess a distinctly separate identity of their own, as will be immediately apparent upon intensely exhaustive study and analysis.

Simple, yes? Naw, we didn't *think* so...but Doug and Paul swear there really is good reason for their six-segment shuffle. Us, we just read 'em as they come out...

Dear Doug:

Well—several issues into the Fu Manchu saga and several to go. I'll start by reiterating that the intricacies of plot and characterization make this the most intriguing comic series around—and the art, as everyone keeps repeating, is unsurpassed by anyone active in comics. Fantastic. The following is, of course, a somewhat limited set of perceptions, since I have not yet seen the entire series. But I'm writing at this point deliberately, to leave it as a kind of landmark for later comparison. While I'm extremely anxious to see how Fu Manchu is portrayed throughout, just a few observations at this point:

Fah Lo Suee's latest appearance is a great improvement over her earlier appearances. While still evil, attractive, sinister, and above all herself, she has thankfully dropped the cultural accoutrements—gong, flaming braziers, mandarin-collar gowns, exaggerated features—all of which contribute to the pejorative Asian stereotype. In #45 one finds instead a modern, ruthless villainess—a worthy counterpart to the contemporary heroine Leiko, both of whom have the convenience of extensive organizations behind them.

I noticed that Don Warfield's coloring of Fu Manchu in #44 was the same as that accorded everyone else, whereas Petra Goldberg's coloring of him in #45 reverted to the pale yellow complexion. Without wanting to raise this as a major issue again, I wonder if anyone really finds the pale-yellow Fu Manchu to be a necessary motif. The character's depiction in #44 seems to gain more "character" through increased realism than it loses by dropping the symbolism.

This last point is the most complicated. I have an abiding belief, so far fundamentally unshaken, that Fu Manchu cannot be depicted in a non-stereotyped form as long as the elements which define the character are maintained—as they must be. For this reason, I still feel that his absence is perhaps the greatest improvement possible in the series. On the other hand, I realize that he is integrated with the plotline and necessary to it. Certainly the aspect of Fu Manchu's unpleasantness in racial terms can vary widely in degree. So, while not abandoning the basic desire to see him gone, I'm very interested in seeing what the next several issues hold. I appreciate your efforts very much, and enjoy this series above all others.

By the way, I've kept an eye out for Shen Kuei, but apparently he's pussy-footing down other alleyways...

Bill Wu
The Peninsula Hotel, Rm 458
Hong Kong

It was probably a mistake, Bill, to print your letter when there's such little space in which to reply—but we felt the letter itself deserved to see print. The best we can do right now is mention that next issue—"Part VI (Fu Manchu): The Dreamslayer"—will delve more deeply into the Fu Manchu character than ever before. Till then, be good.